FIRST COMICS
NOV 10 1988
$1.95 $2.45 CANADA
EVANGELINE
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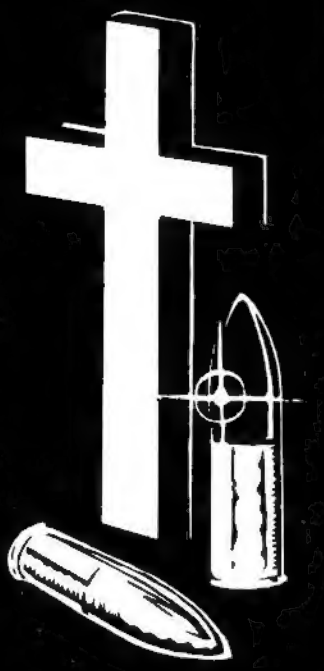
WHO ARE THESE GUYS, ANYWAY?



It is the 22nd century, and many things have changed... humans have colonized the stars and made great technological advances. And many things remain the same... they still persecute each other for their beliefs. Enter **Evangeline**: executioner and saviour. A woman with a dark past and one unswerving allegiance.

She is an expert at hand-to-hand combat, demolitions and electronics, and is proficient with a wide variety of weapons — but she has a special affinity for the old-fashioned bow and arrow. Often introduced as a countess, only a few friends know what she truly is. Among them are **Cardinal Szn**, the Vatican head of intelligence who recruited her and assigns her missions; **Brian Hager** who helped train her; and **Jonny Six**, a thief who sees Evangeline as more than a consummate professional.

What is Evangeline? She is an avenger and protector of those persecuted for their beliefs, or persecuted in the name of the new religion — science.

Who is Evangeline? She's a nun — a very *dangerous* nun.

LAST ISSUE: Five years ago, on her first mission, Evangeline and Brian rescued girls that were being kidnapped to serve as host mothers. The clone-children had the genetic ability to pilot starships through N-space — a very lucrative commodity. Now, five years later, Evangeline's out to find those children...

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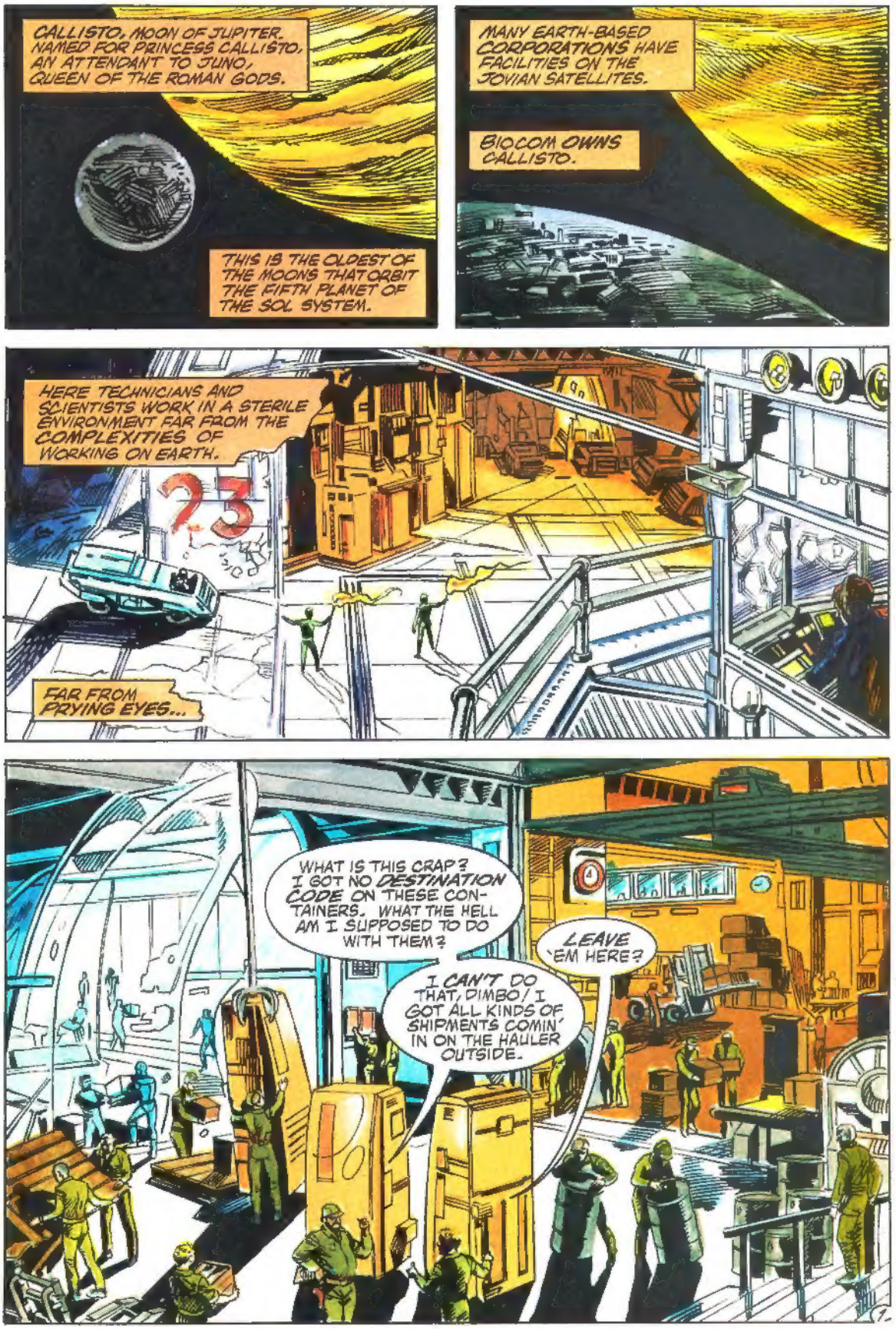
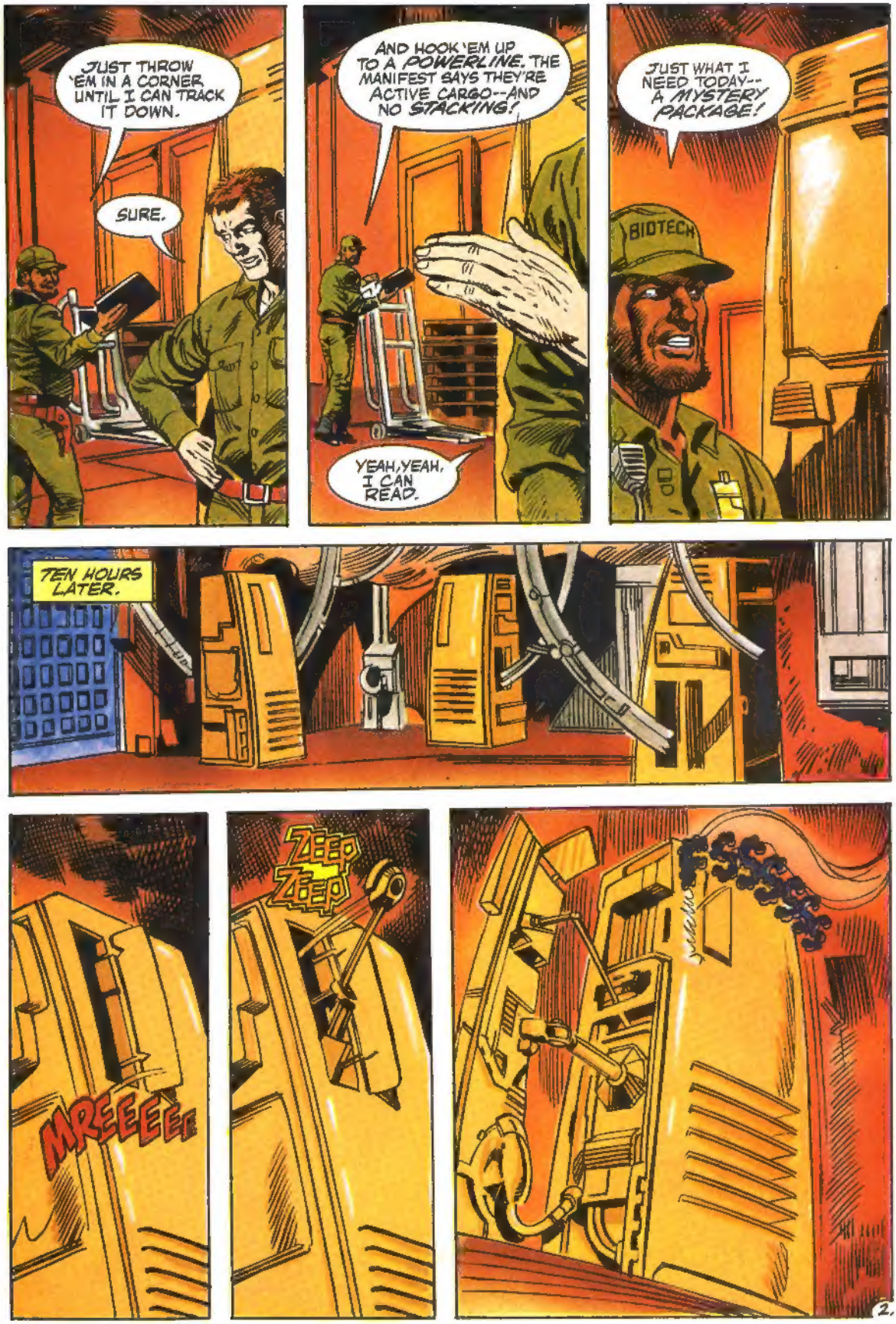
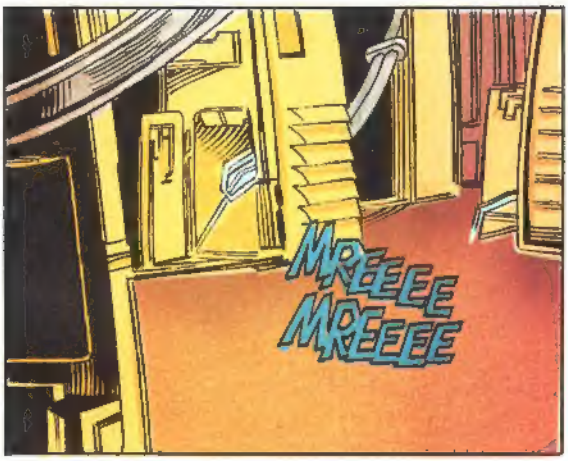
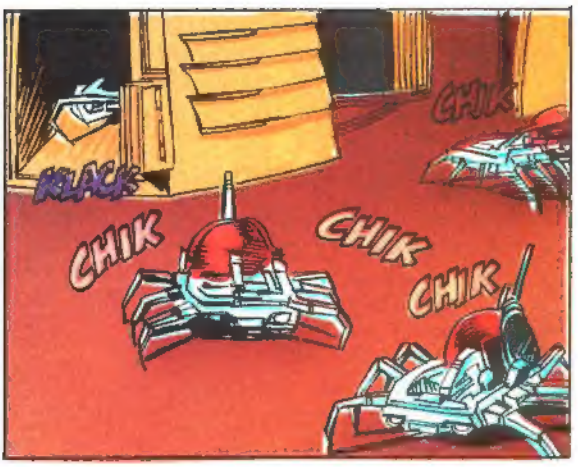

CALLISTO, MOON OF JUPITER. NAMED FOR PRINCESS CALLISTO, AN ATTENDANT TO JUNO, QUEEN OF THE ROMAN GODS.
THIS IS THE OLDEST OF THE MOONS THAT ORBIT THE FIFTH PLANET OF THE SOL SYSTEM.
MANY EARTH-BASED CORPORATIONS HAVE FACILITIES ON THE JOVIAN SATELLITES.
BIOCOM OWNS CALLISTO.
HERE TECHNICIANS AND SCIENTISTS WORK IN A STERILE ENVIRONMENT FAR FROM THE COMPLEXITIES OF WORKING ON EARTH.
FAR FROM PRYING EYES...
WHAT IS THIS CRAP? I GOT NO DESTINATION CODE ON THESE CONTAINERS. WHAT THE HELL AM I SUPPOSED TO DO WITH THEM?
LEAVE 'EM HERE?
I CAN'T DO THAT, DIMBO, I GOT ALL KINDS OF SHIPMENTS COMIN' IN ON THE HAULER OUTSIDE.


JUST THROW 'EM IN A CORNER UNTIL I CAN TRACK IT DOWN.
SURE.
AND HOOK 'EM UP TO A POWERLINE. THE MANIFEST SAYS THEY'RE ACTIVE CARGO--AND NO STACKING!
YEAH, YEAH, I CAN READ.
JUST WHAT I NEED TODAY-- A MYSTERY PACKAGE!
BIDTECH
TEN HOURS LATER.
MREEEEE
ZEEP ZEEP
FSSSSS


MREEEEE
MREEEEE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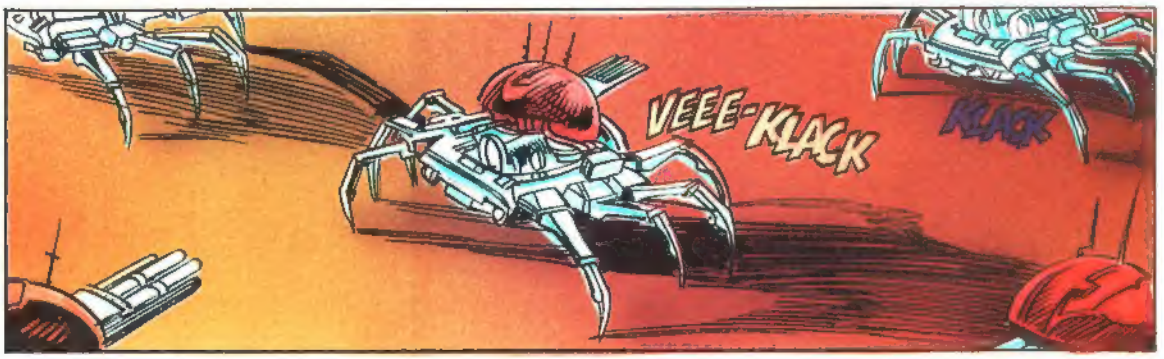
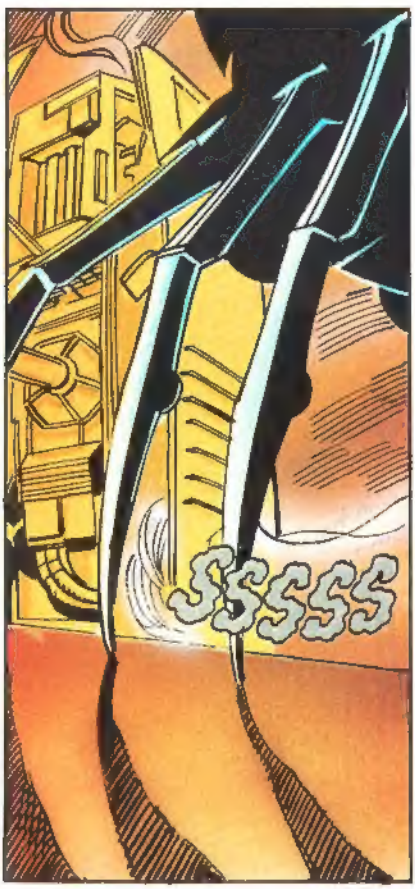

VEEE-KLACK
KLACK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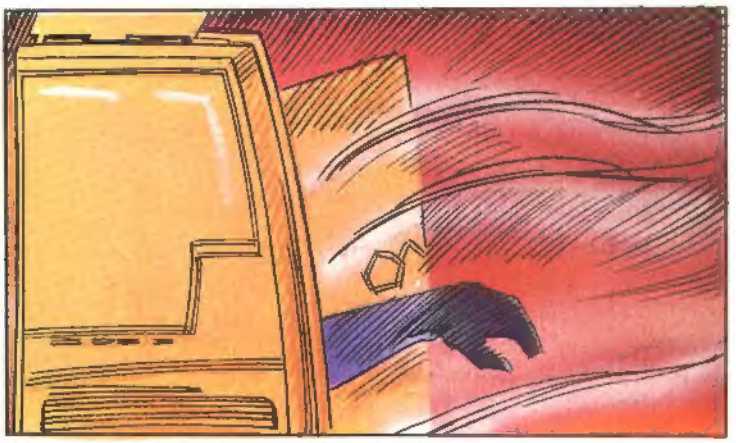
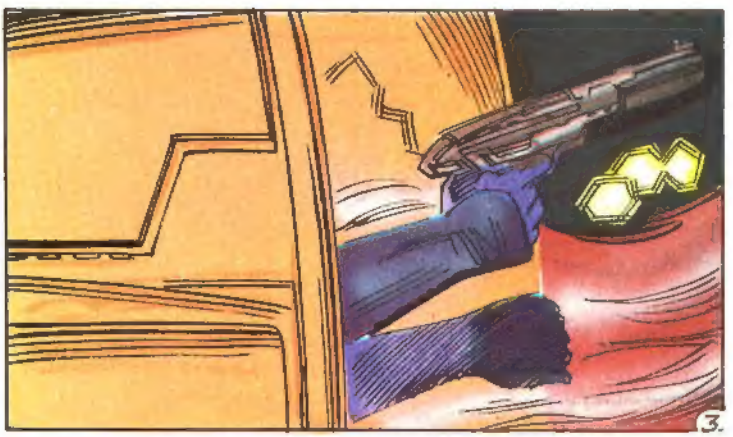
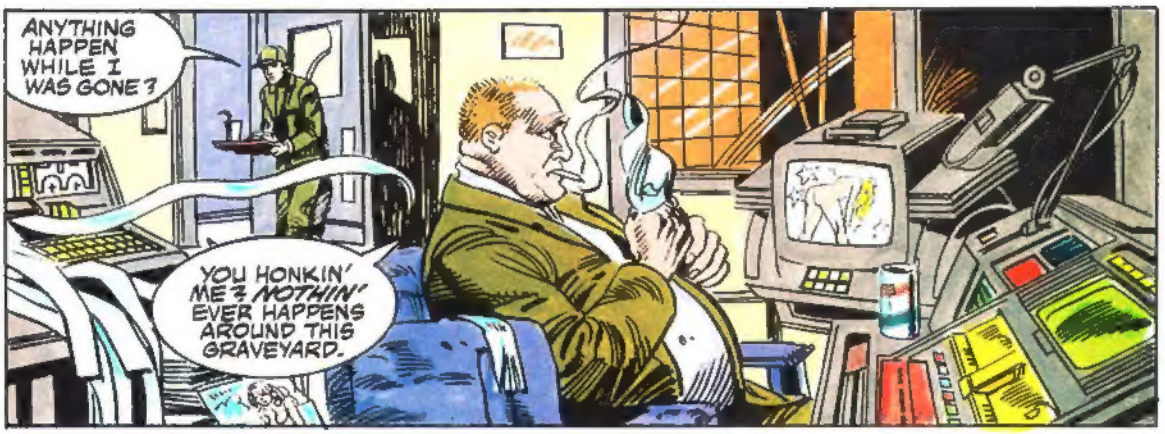
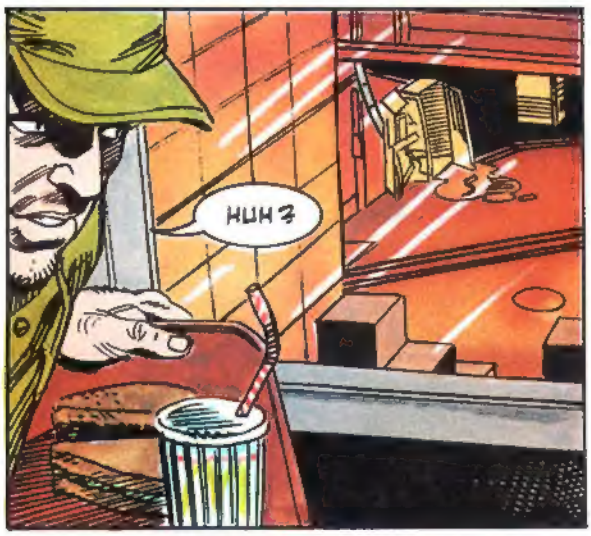
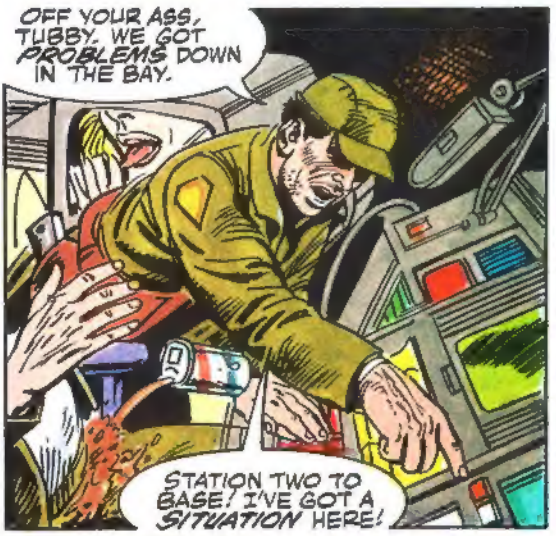


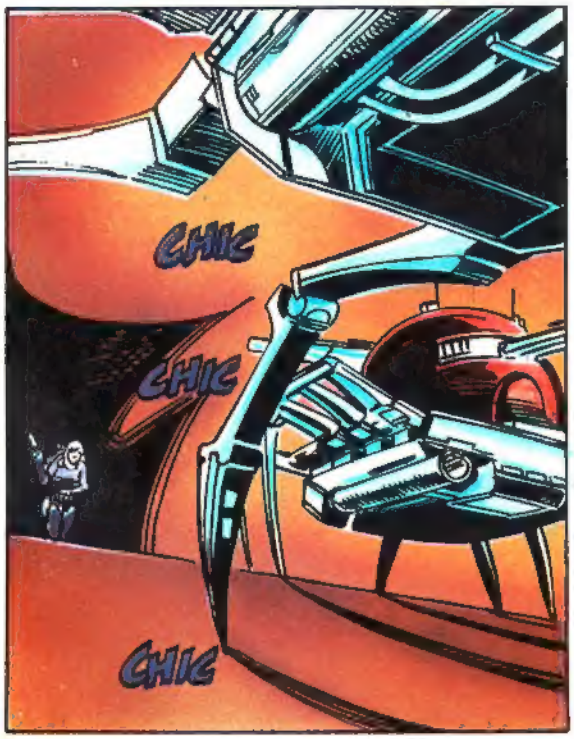


IN 1987 THE VATICAN, UNDER POPE JOHN PAUL II, CONDEMNED ANY GENETIC OR EUGENIC EXPERIMENTATION INVOLVING HUMAN BEINGS IN ANY WAY.
IN THE CENTURY AFTER NEXT, BIOCOM IS PERFORMING JUST THAT SORT OF EXPERIMENTATION ON THE MOON CALLISTO.
EVANGELINE
STORY
CHARLES DIXON
PENCILS
JOHN STATEMA
INKS
RICARDO VILLAGRAN
COLORS
TOM McCRAW
LETTERS
TOM ADDIS
EDITOR
LAUREL FITCH
THIS CAME TO THE ATTENTION OF A CARDINAL SZN.
HE SENT A NUN TO LOOK INTO IT.
RUTHLESS ANGEL


ANYTHING HAPPEN WHILE I WAS GONE?
YOU HONKIN' ME? NOTHIN' EVER HAPPENS AROUND THIS GRAVEYARD.


HUH?


OFF YOUR ASS, TUBBY. WE GOT PROBLEMS DOWN IN THE BAY.
STATION TWO TO BASE! I'VE GOT A SITUATION HERE!


CHIC
CHIC
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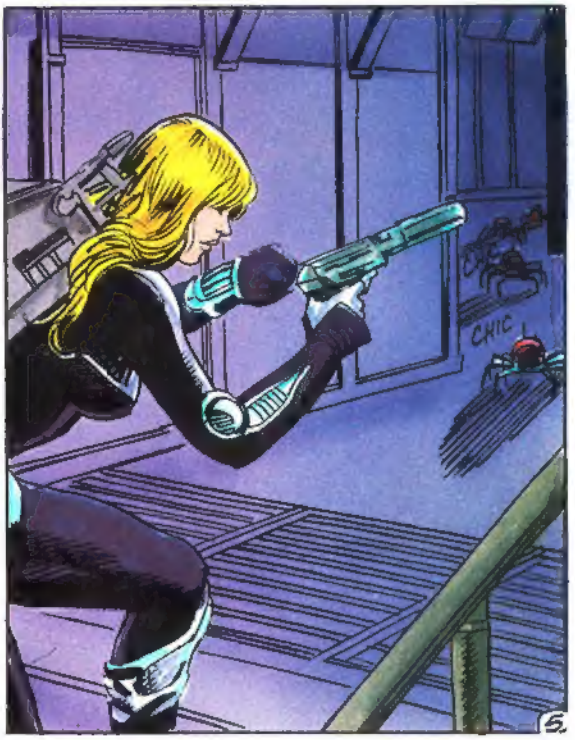
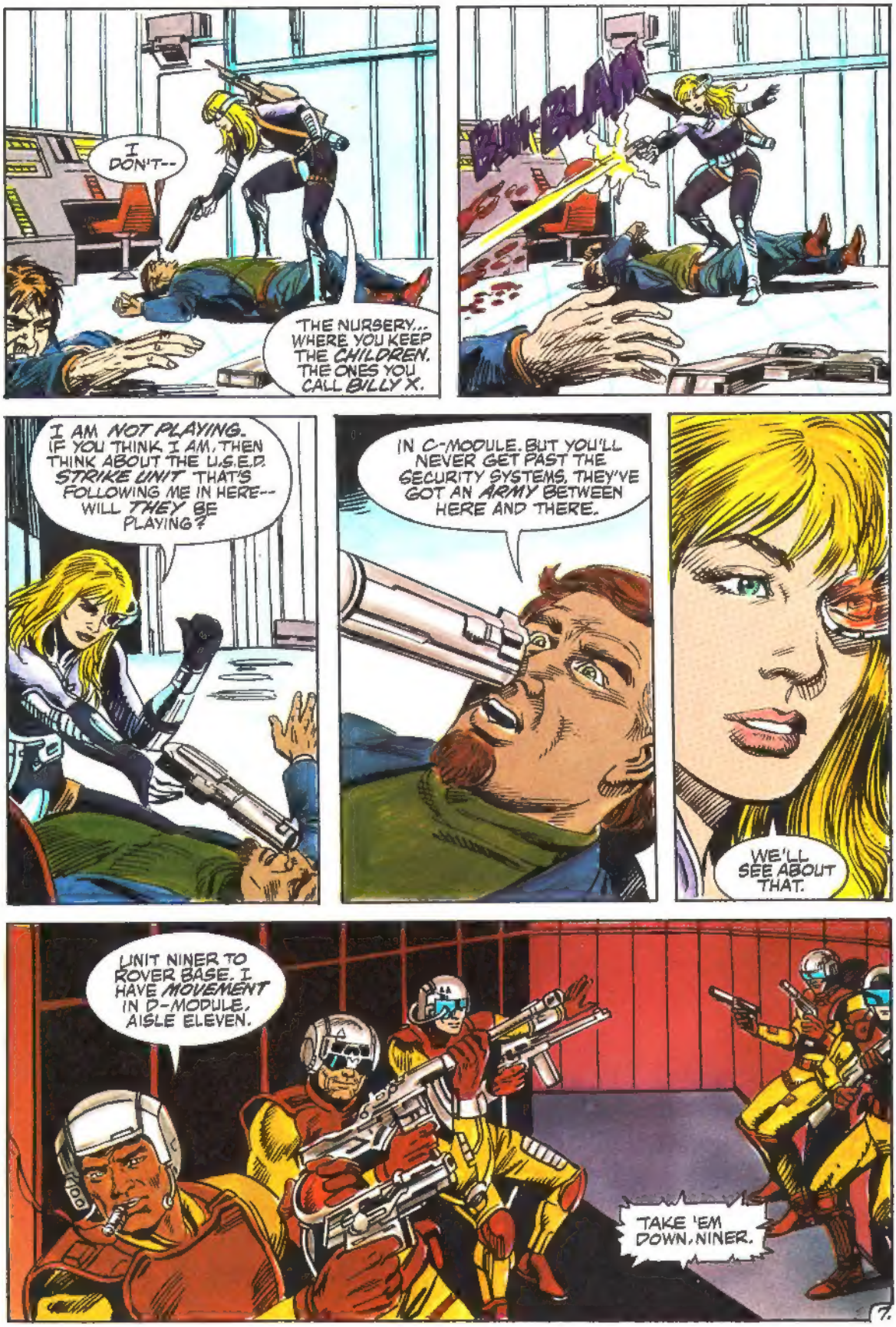
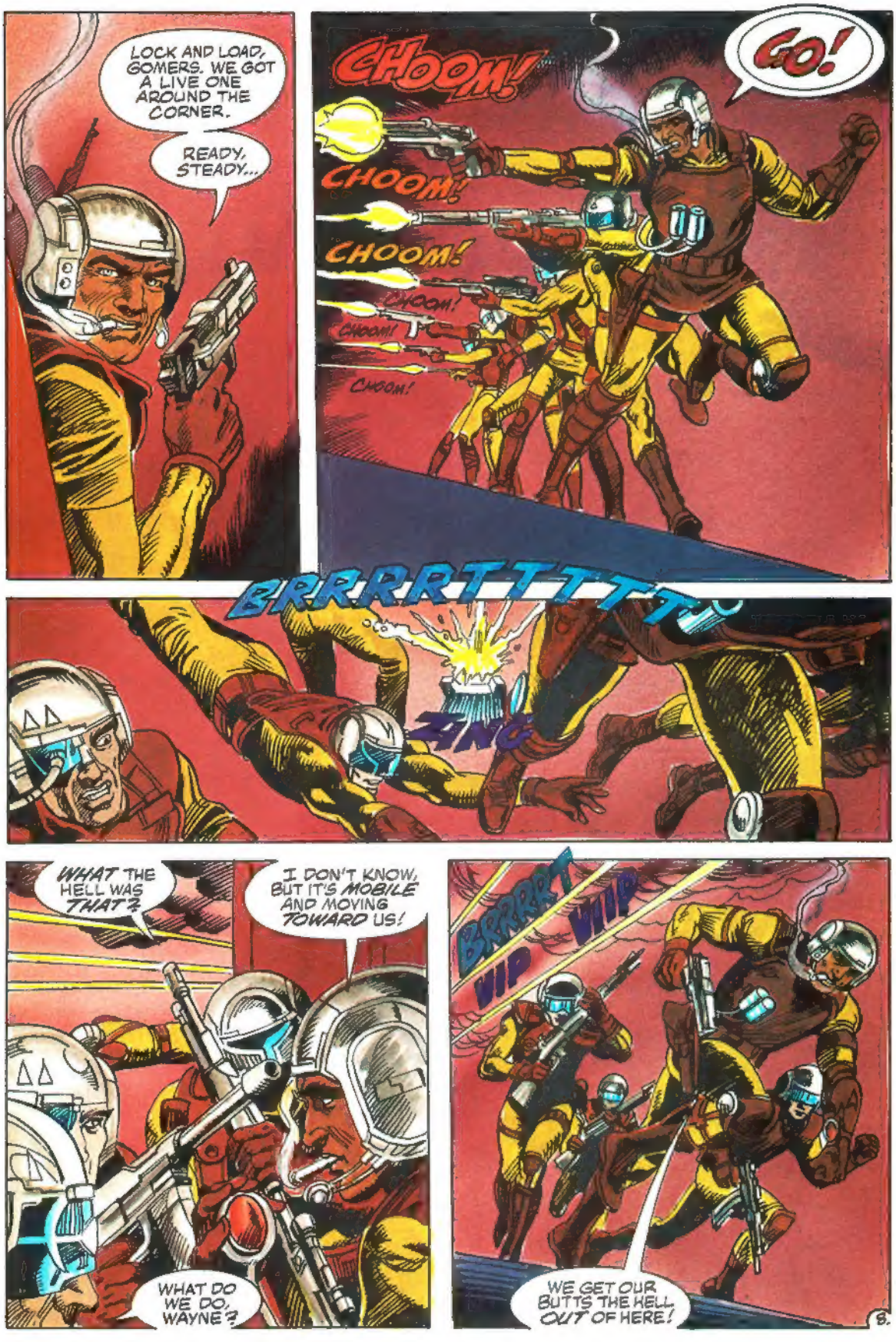

CHIC

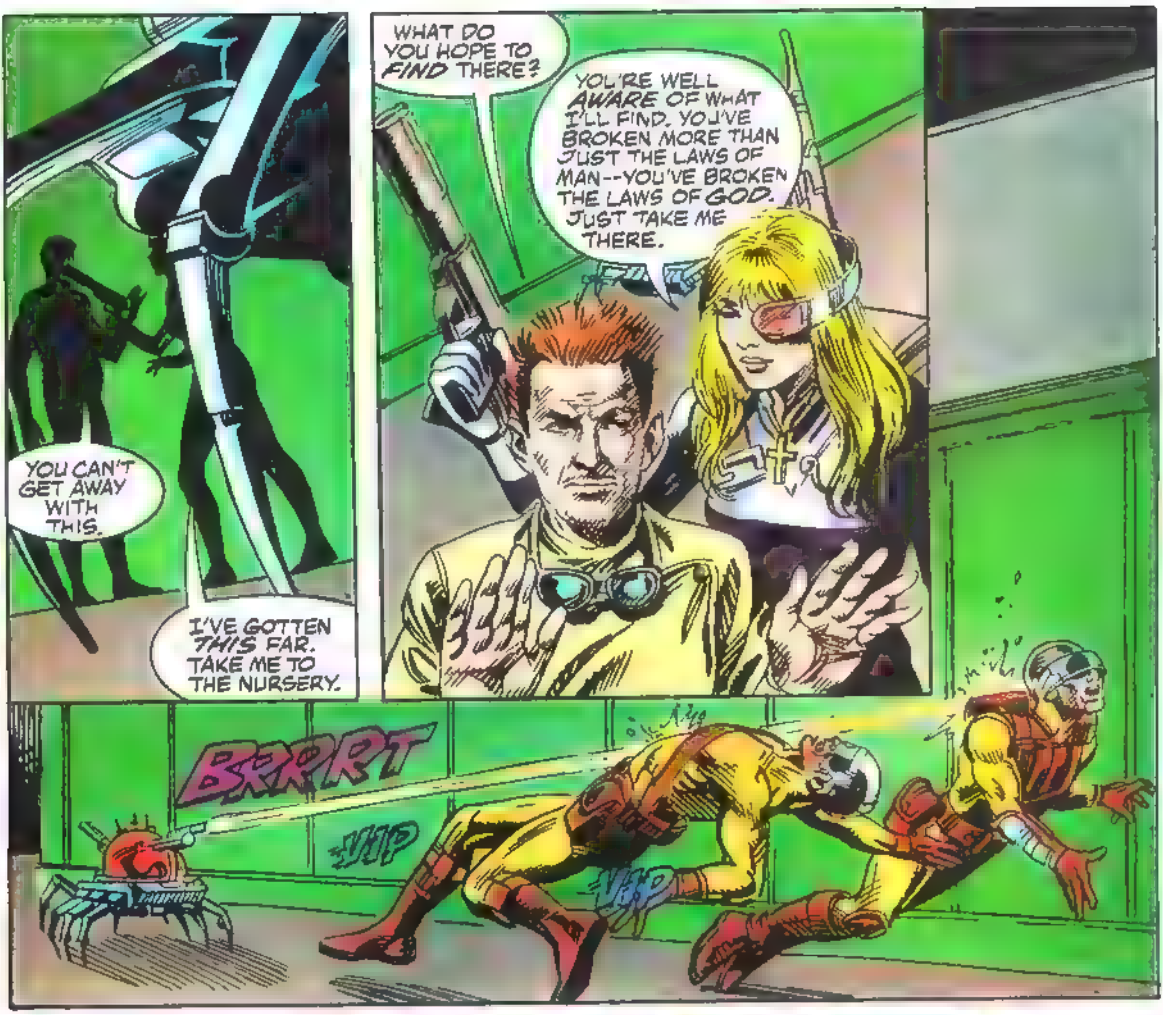
I GOT TWO U.S.E.D. CRUISERS JUST WENT INTO ORBIT OVER US-- AND THIS GUY'S BARKIN' OFF.
CALM DOWN, VITELLI. WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU'VE GOT A "SITUATION?"
THOSE THREE UNMANIFESTED CONTAINERS ARE OPEN.
NO ONE'S BEEN ON THE DOCK. THE CONTAINERS OPENED THEMSELVES, SIR!
REALLY?!
RELAX, VITELLI. I'LL SEND SOME ROVERS DOWN TO...
BUH-KOOM
UH? whuh?
WHERE'S THE NURSERY?
6.


I DON'T--
THE NURSERY... WHERE YOU KEEP THE CHILDREN. THE ONES YOU CALL BILLY X.
BLAM-BLAM
I AM NOT PLAYING. IF YOU THINK I AM, THEN THINK ABOUT THE U.S.E.D. STRIKE UNIT THAT'S FOLLOWING ME IN HERE-- WILL THEY BE PLAYING?
IN C-MODULE. BUT YOU'LL NEVER GET PAST THE SECURITY SYSTEMS. THEY'VE GOT AN ARMY BETWEEN HERE AND THERE.
WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT.
UNIT NINER TO ROVER BASE. I HAVE MOVEMENT IN D-MODULE, AISLE ELEVEN.
TAKE 'EM DOWN, NINER.


LOCK AND LOAD, GOMERS. WE GOT A LIVE ONE AROUND THE CORNER.
READY, STEADY...
CHOOM!
CHOOM!
CHOOM!
CHOOM!
CHOOM!
CHOOM!
GO!
BRRRRTTTTT
ZING
WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?
I DON'T KNOW, BUT IT'S MOBILE AND MOVING TOWARD US!
WHAT DO WE DO, WAYNE?
BRRRRT
VIP
VIP
WE GET OUR BUTTS THE HELL OUT OF HERE!

FOOOSH
FOOSH
TAP TAP TAP
HHSSSS
TAP
BUH-
WHRAM
BRRT
BRRRT
9

WHAT'S HAPPENING? WHAT ARE THOSE EXPLOSIONS?
HAS THE FACILITY BEEN VIOLATED? WHAT'S GOING ON?
VIOLATED?! WE'RE GETTIN' GREASED, DOC! THE U.S.E.D.'S GOT A HARD ON FOR US!
SOME GIRL ARMED TO THE TEETH AND A PAIR OF WAR-DROIDS ARE TAKING THIS PLACE OUT! AND THEY'RE HEADED HERE!
IF I WERE YOU, I'D BE SOMEPLACE ELSE WHEN SHE GETS HERE!
UNG!
BUH-BLAMM
I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR NICETIES, SINNER. COOPERATE AND YOU WON'T BE KILLED.


YOU CAN'T GET AWAY WITH THIS.
I'VE GOTTEN THIS FAR. TAKE ME TO THE NURSERY.
WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO FIND THERE?
YOU'RE WELL AWARE OF WHAT I'LL FIND. YOU'VE BROKEN MORE THAN JUST THE LAWS OF MAN--YOU'VE BROKEN THE LAWS OF GOD. JUST TAKE ME THERE.
BRRRT
VHP
VHP

KEEP MOVING.

MOVE TO ONE SIDE AND STAY IN SIGHT.
Y-YES...

FIRST PERSON SINGULAR

Random Remarks by the Editor

ON EDITING FINE GRAPHIC FICTION

My old colleagues don't understand my new profession.

When I tell them I'm now the managing editor of First Comics, they look at me like I just announced I quit my job to bag groceries

— Comics? *Comic* Books?

or run away to join the circus

—What fun!

or that, tragically, I'm another burnt out victim of this jading age.

— Hey, *great*, eh, that sounds *really* great, a, for you.

Though perhaps I did burn out. As science reporter for United Press International, one of the last news stories I wrote was about how diets high in soluble fiber — found in beans, for example — might be more cost-effective than drugs in lowering cholesterol levels and preventing heart attacks. I suggested the headline:

Beans, Beans
They're Good
For Your Heart,
Study Finds

I was serious. Mostly. But journalists take their journalism a bit more seriously than that. Journalists take journalism a bit more seriously than they take alcohol and cigarettes, and that's pretty damned seriously.

That's because being a journalist *is the most important thing a person can do.*

When they're not forwarding the liberal agenda or undermining U.S. foreign policy, journalists are usually busy being the lynchpins of participatory democracy and watchdogs of the Bill of Rights, especially that first part.

And when they're not doing that, they're usually drinking in journalist bars, arguing about journalism, and getting into fistfights with other journalists. Journalists also like to discuss the Art of Journalism, though not so much as they like to gossip about fellow journalists, snipe at the work of hack inferiors and praise their journalism gods.

Unlike people in the comic book business.

And so my old colleagues are mystified. They don't understand why anyone would want to leave journalism for any reason, except to run for political office or under a doctor's orders. They pretty much believe Clark Kent was neglecting his job.

"Journalists like to discuss the Art of Journalism, though not so much as they like to gossip about other journalists, snipe at the work of hack inferiors and praise their journalism gods."

All of which makes it difficult to answer the question

— You edit *comic books?* Just comic books?

Few journalists read comic books; the closest they get is U.S.A. Today. So once we determine I won't be reinterpreting Batman, rethinking Superman or redesigning Spider-Man, I find myself struggling to explain and justify. Shamelessly, I grope for "icons" and "mythos," extolling "the unexplored possibilities of the art form" told through "graphic storytelling" for "adult audiences."

But then I think: what crap.

So now when my old colleagues ask

— You edit *comic books?* Just comic books?

I answer

— No, I edit *really cool* comic books.

— Larry Doyle

FIRST IN JULY

Lone Wolf and Cub #15: By **Kazuo Koike** and **Goseki Kojima.** Cover painting by **Bill Sienkiewicz.**

Badger #41: By **Mike Baron** and **Ron Lim.**

Evangeline #10: By **Charles Dixon, John Statema,** and **Ricardo Villagran.**

Nexus #50: Special double-sized 50th anniversary issue! **Crossroads** tie-in. By **Mike Baron** and **Steve Rude.**

Dreadstar #39: Crossroads tie-in. By **Jim Starlin** and **Angel Medina.**

Grimjack #52: Crossroads tie-in. By **John Ostrander** and **Tom Mandrake.**

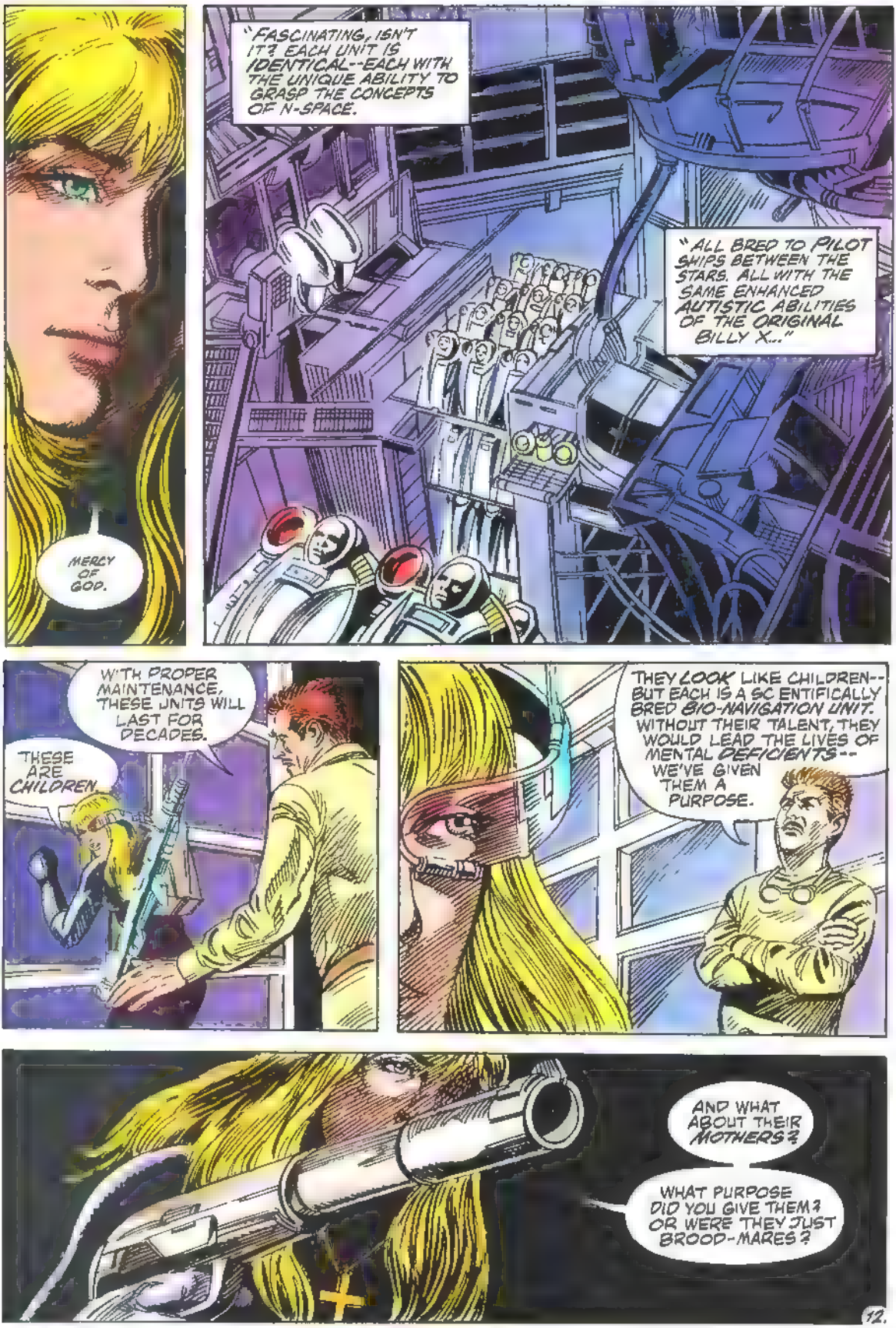
Whisper #18: By **Steven Grant** and **Spyder.**

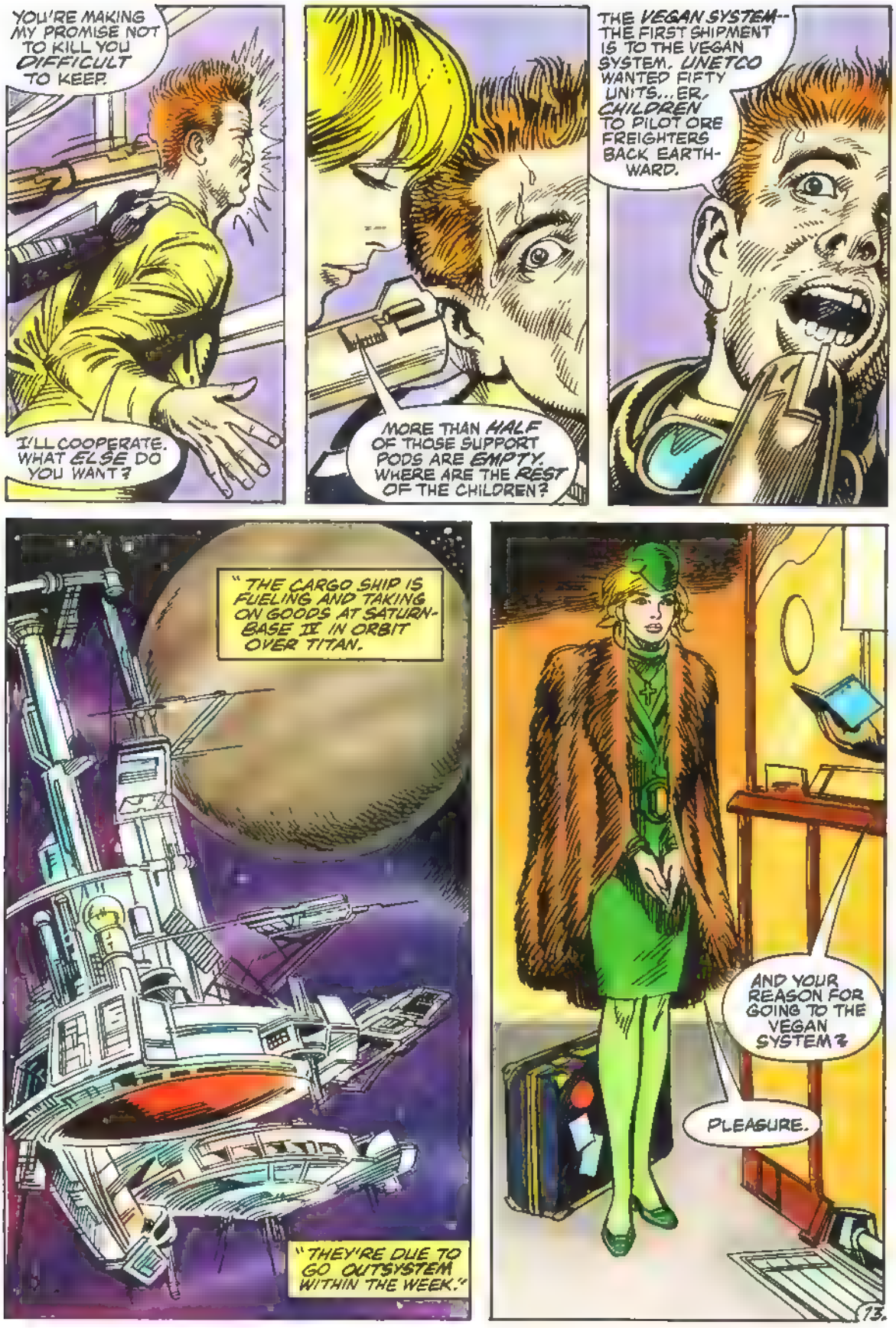
Howard Chaykin's American Flagg! #7: By **Chaykin** et al. Reader discretion advised.

Crossroads #5: Nexus is after Dreadstar, with Grimjack caught in the middle! By **Mike Baron, Luke McDonnell** and **Val Mayerik.**

Chronicles of Corum #12: By **Mark Shainblum, Jill Thompson,** and **Kelley Jones.**

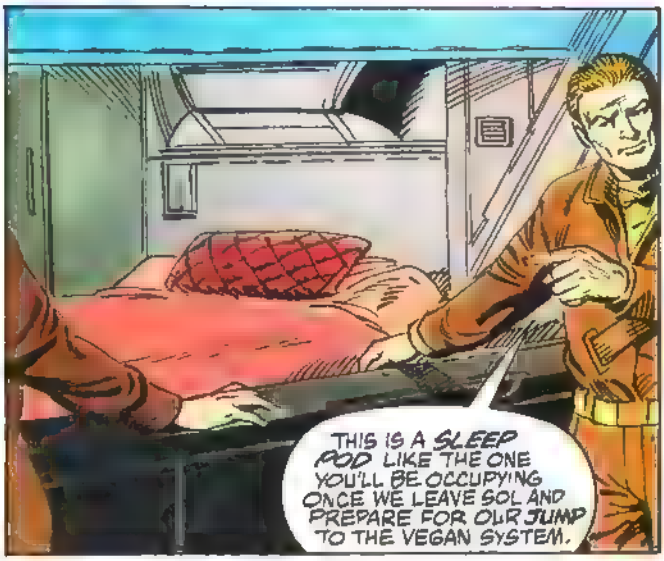
Sable #9: By **Marv Wolfman, Bill Jaaska,** and **Doug Hazlewood.**


MERCY OF GOD.
"FASCINATING, ISN'T IT? EACH UNIT IS IDENTICAL--EACH WITH THE UNIQUE ABILITY TO GRASP THE CONCEPTS OF N-SPACE.
"ALL BRED TO PILOT SHIPS BETWEEN THE STARS. ALL WITH THE SAME ENHANCED AUTISTIC ABILITIES OF THE ORIGINAL BILLY X..."
THESE ARE CHILDREN.
WITH PROPER MAINTENANCE, THESE UNITS WILL LAST FOR DECADES.
THEY LOOK LIKE CHILDREN--BUT EACH IS A SCIENTIFICALLY BRED BIO-NAVIGATION UNIT. WITHOUT THEIR TALENT, THEY WOULD LEAD THE LIVES OF MENTAL DEFICIENTS--WE'VE GIVEN THEM A PURPOSE.
AND WHAT ABOUT THEIR MOTHERS?
WHAT PURPOSE DID YOU GIVE THEM? OR WERE THEY JUST BROOD-MARES?

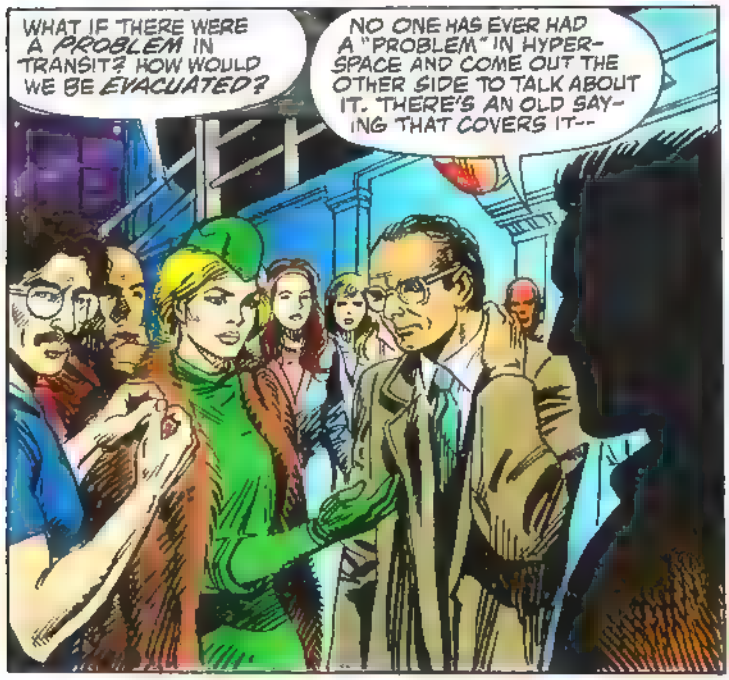

YOU'RE MAKING MY PROMISE NOT TO KILL YOU *DIFFICULT* TO KEEP.
I'LL COOPERATE. WHAT *ELSE* DO YOU WANT?
MORE THAN *HALF* OF THOSE SUPPORT PODS ARE *EMPTY*. WHERE ARE THE *REST* OF THE CHILDREN?
THE *VEGAN SYSTEM*-- THE FIRST SHIPMENT IS TO THE VEGAN SYSTEM. *UNETCO* WANTED FIFTY UNITS...ER, *CHILDREN* TO PILOT ORE FREIGHTERS BACK EARTH-WARD.
"THE CARGO SHIP IS FUELING AND TAKING ON GOODS AT SATURN-BASE II IN ORBIT OVER TITAN.
"THEY'RE DUE TO GO OUTSYSTEM WITHIN THE WEEK."
AND YOUR REASON FOR GOING TO THE VEGAN SYSTEM?
PLEASURE.
13.

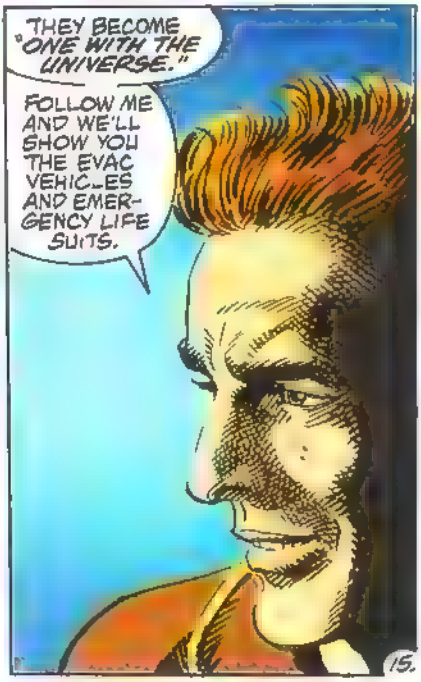
PLEASURE?! VEGAN IS THE HELLHOLE OF THE KNOWN GALAXY. IT AIN'T A RESORT, LADY.
PERHAPS I SHOULD HAVE SAID, "ADVENTURE."
I HAVE SEVERAL BUSINESS HOLDINGS THERE. I DON'T PRETEND TO KNOW MUCH ABOUT THEM, BUT I THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE INTERESTING TO VISIT THEM.
IT'LL BE "INTERESTING," ALL RIGHT.
YOU'RE CLEARED TO JUMP SYSTEM ON THE BOESKI HAULER LEAVING TOMORROW FROM THE MAIN SLIP.
A PIECE LIKE THAT WANTS TO TRAVEL TO THE VEGAN AND YOU WANT TO TALK HER OUT OF IT?
COOL YOUR PIPES AND GET YOUR PAPERS ON THE COUNTER--OR GO TO THE END OF THE LINE.
14.

THE INSURANCE COMPANIES INSIST THAT WE GIVE THIS LITTLE SAFETY LECTURE.
SO IF YOU'LL BEAR WITH US, WE'LL GET IT OUT OF THE WAY AND YOU CAN ENJOY THE TRIP.


THIS IS A SLEEP POD LIKE THE ONE YOU'LL BE OCCUPYING ONCE WE LEAVE SOL AND PREPARE FOR OUR JUMP TO THE VEGAN SYSTEM.

THE JUMP ONLY TAKES TWO WEEKS, BUT YOU'LL ENJOY THE TRIP MORE IF YOU SLEEP THROUGH N-SPACE. FASTER THAN LIGHT TRAVEL CAN BE... UNCOMFORTABLE.


WHAT IF THERE WERE A PROBLEM IN TRANSIT? HOW WOULD WE BE EVACUATED?
NO ONE HAS EVER HAD A "PROBLEM" IN HYPER-SPACE AND COME OUT THE OTHER SIDE TO TALK ABOUT IT. THERE'S AN OLD SAYING THAT COVERS IT--


THEY BECOME "ONE WITH THE UNIVERSE."
FOLLOW ME AND WE'LL SHOW YOU THE EVAC VEHICLES AND EMERGENCY LIFE SUITS.

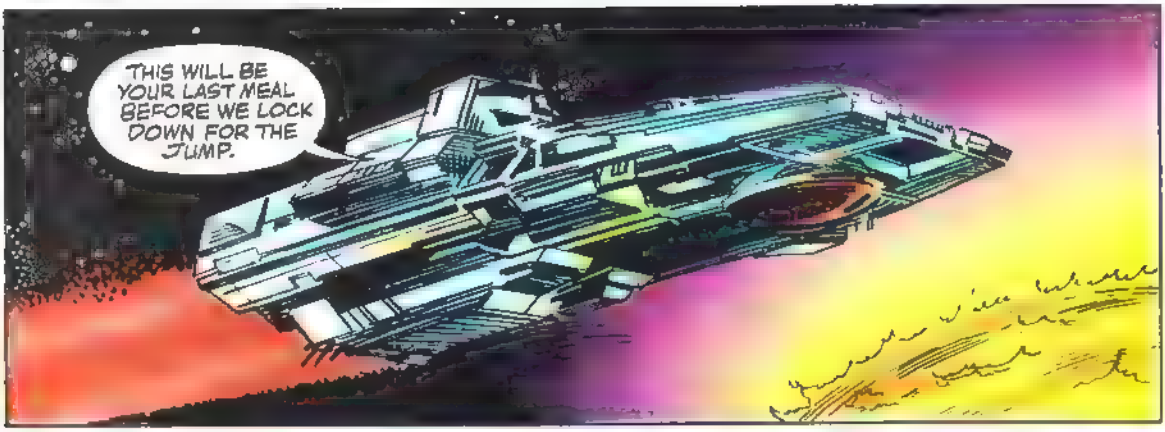
THEY TELL ME YOU'RE A COUNTESS. IS THAT TRUE OR SIMPLY RUMOR?
OH, IT'S TRUE ENOUGH. COUNTESS EVANGELINA DI CHRISTI.
AND YOU ARE?

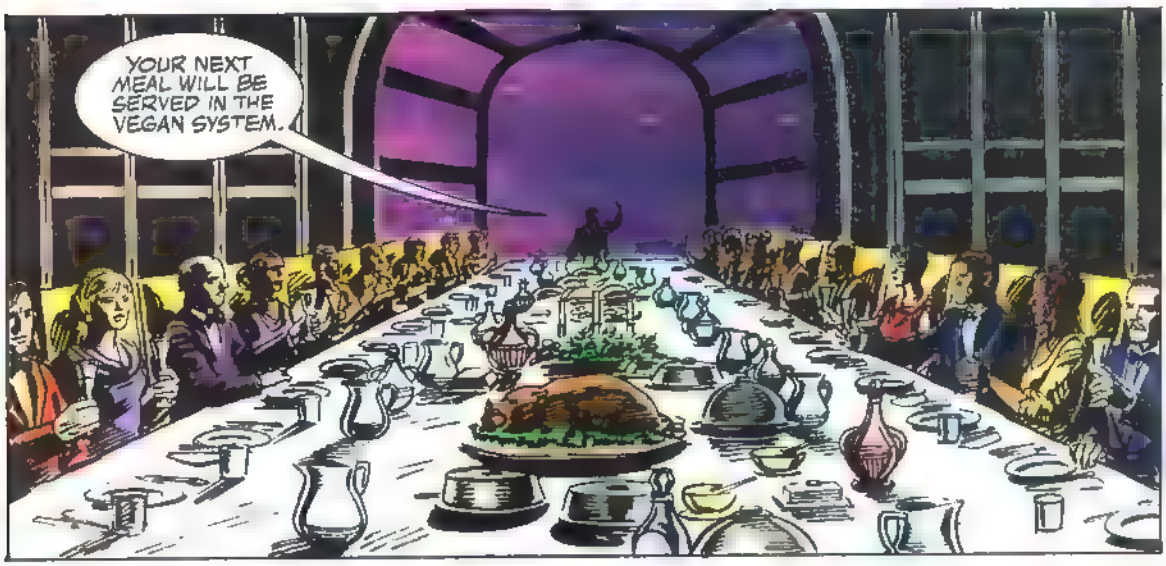
GRANT KELLOG. I'M TAKING A CONSIGNMENT OF NAVIGATION UNITS TO VEGA IX. DO YOU HAVE BUSINESS IN THE VEGAN?
ONLY AS AN EXCUSE TO TRAVEL.

THE VEGAN ISN'T EXACTLY A VACATION SPOT.
ALL OF THE RESORTS HAVE BECOME SO DEADLY DULL. MARS, LUNA, WONDERSTAR --SO TIRESOME.

PERHAPS WE'LL SEE MORE OF EACH OTHER ON THE TRIP TO THE VEGAN.
I MIGHT LIKE THAT. YOU COULD BUY ME A DRINK.

CERTAINLY-- COUNTESS.


THIS WILL BE YOUR LAST MEAL BEFORE WE LOCK DOWN FOR THE JUMP.


YOUR NEXT MEAL WILL BE SERVED IN THE VEGAN SYSTEM.

A SHAME THAT WE COULDN'T HAVE SPENT MORE TIME TOGETHER. I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU MANAGED TO AVOID ME FOR A WEEK INSIDE THIS SHIP.
I KNOW HOW TO KEEP OCCUPIED.

I WILL BE *FREE* ONCE WE REACH THE VEGAN SYSTEM.

I WON'T—ONCE WE'RE IN-SYSTEM MY WORK WEEK BEGINS. WE HAVE *ORDERS* BACKED UP FOR MY COMPANY'S NEW NAV-UN TS. ONCE THESE UN TS BE-COME COMMON, THIS TRIP WILL TAKE *HALF* THE TIME.

YOU'VE ALL BEEN PREPPED. NOW WE'LL HAND OUT A SEDA-T.VE TO MAKE YOU DROWSY.
AND WHEN YOU WAKE UP, WE'LL BE BASKING IN THE L GHT OF ANOTHER STAR.

THREE "DAYS" LATER.
IT'S COLD AS HELL DOWN HERE.
BET YOUR BUTT--THEY HAVE TO KEEP IT COLD FOR THE SLEEPERS. SAVES ENERGY ANYWAY.
YOU SURE THIS IS THE ONE?
YEAH, I SAW HER GET INSIDE. WE JUST PUT THE UNIT ON THAW AND SHE'LL BE DEAD AS DIRT WHEN WE REACH THE VEGAN.
AND IT'LL LOOK LIKE A SCREW UP?
SURE--SOMEBODY SET HER THAW DATE TOO EARLY. NO QUESTIONS.
SHE'S BEAUTIFUL, EH?
I WOULDN'T THROW HER OUT OF MY BUNK. WHAT'S THE MATTER?
EDDIE...
SHE AIN'T IN THERE.
YOU BOYS LOOKING FOR ME?

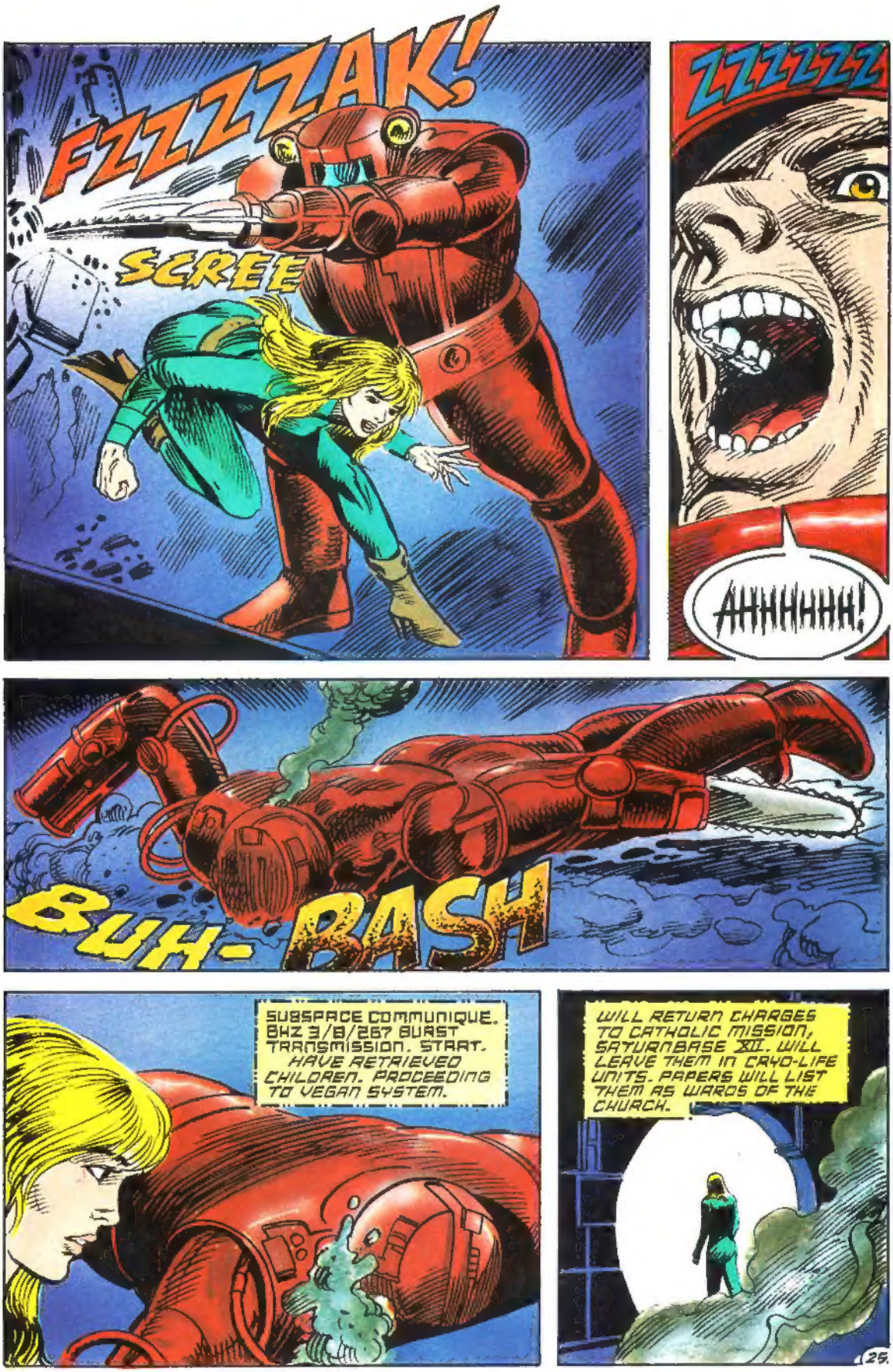
KELLOG SENT YOU. I WASN'T SUPPOSED TO LIVE TO SEE THE VEGAN, WAS I?
I GUESS NOT. HE DAMN SURE PAID ENOUGH TO SEE YOU DEAD--
--AND I WANT TO COLLECT!
UNG!
KLOP
BLAM
SPLOK
20.

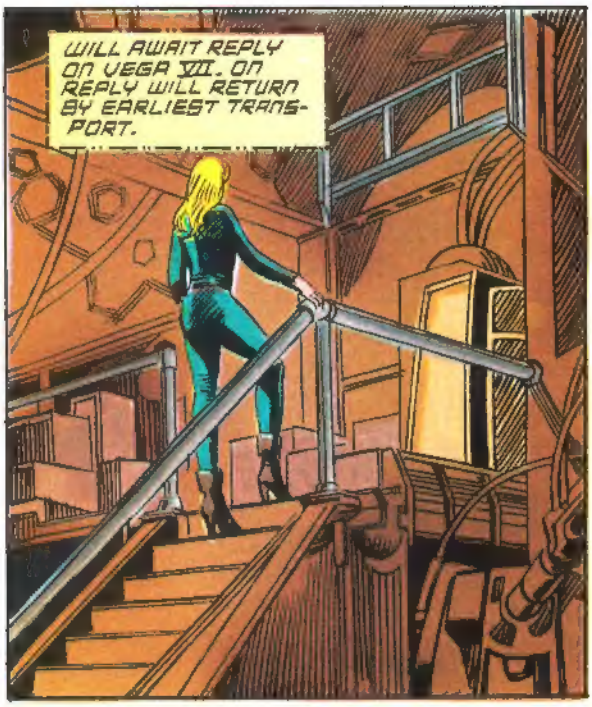
KELLOG.

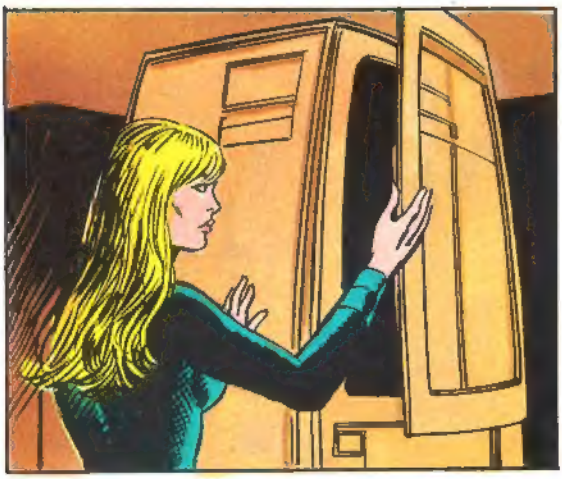
BRAAAAM
SCREEEEXXX
VREEE
KRAAK
WHO SENT YOU, BITCH?
VRRREE
I GOT A COMMUNICATION FROM CALLISTO. I HAD A FEELING YOU WERE THE ONE. WELL, YOU WON'T HAVE THE U.S.E.O. FOLLOWING YOU IN HERE.
YOU'RE IN THE WAY, LADY! I CAN'T ALLOW THAT.
SKREEEK

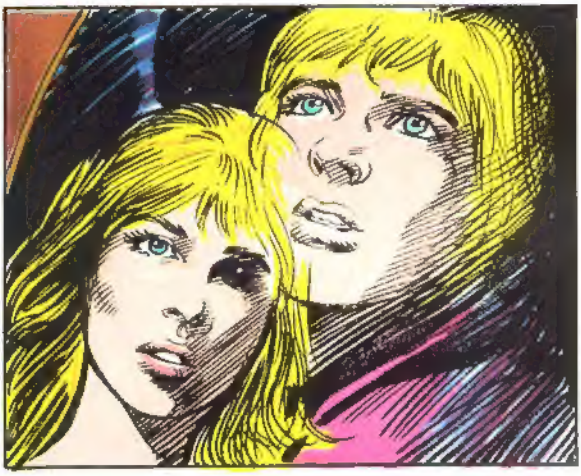
YOU CAN'T ESCAPE. THE REST OF THE CREW IS IN SLEEP CHAMBERS FOR THE NEXT WEEK.
A CRUDE COM-PUTERIZED GUIDANCE SYSTEM PILOTS THIS SHIP--A BILLY X WOULD HAVE HAD US THERE BY NOW!
SKREEAAK!
THE JOURNEY WOULD BE SO MUCH SAFER, TOO--SO MANY THINGS CAN GO WRONG IN N-SPACE.
A BILLY X UNIT IS SO MUCH MORE SUITED TO DEAL WITH EMERGEN-CIES.
A SALES-MAN TO THE LAST...
23

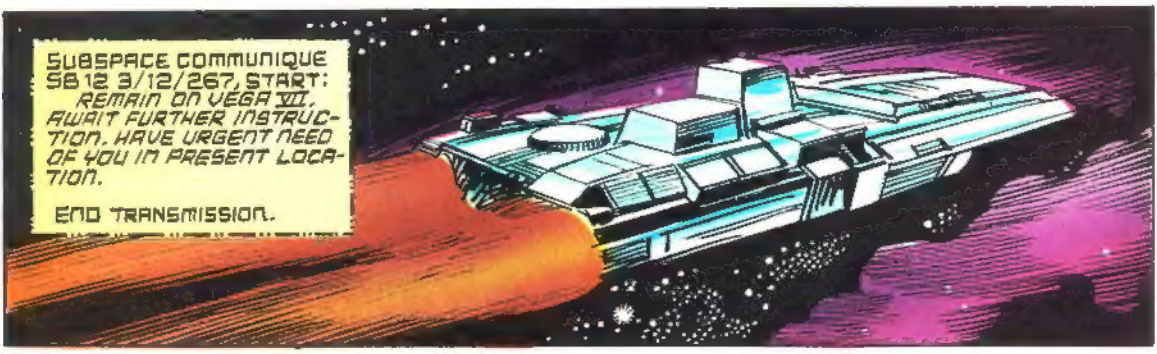
SO YOU'VE DECIDED TO STOP RUNNING, COUNTESS.
FIRE
KLACK
I'LL MAKE IT QUICK.
PATHETIC, COUNTESS.
VSSS
VSSS
I THOUGHT YOU COULD DO BETTER THAN THAT.
VSSS
BUT I'M NOT GOING TO ALLOW YOU ANOTHER CHANCE.
FAREWELL, COUNTESS.
24.


FZZZZAK!
SCREE
ZZZZZZ
AHHHHHH!
BUH-BASH
SUBSPACE COMMUNIQUE. BHZ 3/8/267 BURST TRANSMISSION. START. HAVE RETRIEVED CHILDREN. PROCEEDING TO VEGAN SYSTEM.
WILL RETURN CHARGES TO CATHOLIC MISSION, SATURNBASE XII. WILL LEAVE THEM IN CRYO-LIFE UNITS. PAPERS WILL LIST THEM AS WARDS OF THE CHURCH.
25.








SUBSPACE COMMUNIQUE SB12 3/12/267, START:
REMAIN ON VEGA VII. AWAIT FURTHER INSTRUCTION. HAVE URGENT NEED OF YOU IN PRESENT LOCATION.
END TRANSMISSION.

NEXT **HOSTAGE PLANET**

The CONFESSIONAL

c/o First Comics
435 North LaSalle Chicago IL 60610

Dear Friends,

A couple of comments after reading #8 and seeing my name in print. Do you ever find yourself seeing something you've written and thinking, "I stand by what I said but I wish I hadn't said it quite like that?"

One point I have to raise after reading #8. I don't know that I like what Szn has done with "a young girl that ought to be enjoying her youth."

It's one thing to take a loyal fanatic like the Jesuit Philip and put him to the sort of use envisaged in his conversation with Hager. Philip's a volunteer, however he arrived at his *present* mental commitment. It is quite another to select somebody who's... what, eight or ten, says she wants to be a nun and turn her into what Evangeline is now.

I find myself wondering how much choice she had in the matter, how much choice Szn allowed her. If she had no choice, then Szn is guilty of brain-washing, and indeed destroying, the Evangeline-that-might-have-been to produce the Evangeline-that-is. The mental outlook necessary to do that is dangerous, whether it is a Catholic Cardinal, a KGB man, or a right wing terrorist. It's a delicate balance between just how bad Szn thought the threat was and allowing Evangeline enough freedom to *be* Evangeline. At the moment, we don't have enough information to judge.

Your comments on T.M. Maple's letter about miracles prompts me to make this comment to be a miracle, in my opinion (and it can only be an opinion), requires the direct hand of God. It does not matter whether He acts directly, perhaps by appearing to somebody, or indirectly by sending fish to tempt a shark from a swimming man. It is the direct Hand, the direct attention of God that count, like receiving attention from the computer programmer or the pilot rather than the computer or the autopilot. Therefore it is possible for a miracle to be a scientifically valid happening if God decided directly that it would happen at that moment, rather than leaving it to normal random chance.

As for T.M.'s comments about Evangeline's reactions and remarks [re #6] about what the captive was saying, I find them perfectly reasonable considering the situation and her training. This man attacked her in circumstances which led her to suspect a well organized conspiracy. She is fully justified in assuming that his reaction to her questions is due to the conspiracy. In fact I find the reaction of the other nun, with enough scientific knowledge and training to operate medical equipment, more surprising.

Stephen Goodfellow
87 Vanguard Street
Drumry, Clydebank
Scotland G81 2NB

Dear Confessional Gang:

Considering the miracle questions of #8, I think that in Evangeline's world, science, big business, and an ironic portrayal (or so it seems to me) of our own government allow her mind to see certain things which to us would be miracles. She can observe them, deal with them, etc., but maybe she doesn't have to say, "Wow! A miracle!" when she comes upon one of these activities as we late 20th-century dwellers might. (If she even would say "Wow" about a miraculous occurrence.) I think her world is radically more advanced than we can expect to understand. I see nothing wrong with you all tossing in a few miraculous happenings occasionally. But not things like Evangeline suddenly seeing God, or weird things like that. Along those lines, with Evangeline's literary background and her violent activities, I doubt that she would consider evil, violent men as being possessed. I love the book and am looking forward to new adventures, although I really enjoy filling in her past.

Three other small comments: 1. (This comment is not a complaint! Just a comment.) My copy of #8 had no top staple in it although it was perfectly creased. 2. I like Father Philip's coffee mug on pg. 8. Is that a real character on the mug, or one created by the art team for the mug? 3. I think the cover of #8 would make a great poster!

Shawn Bramanti
204 Center Street
Vermillion, SD 57069

Dear People,

Of all the flashbacks to Evangeline's "early years" that we have seen so far, "Children's Crusade" (#8) comes out on top in my book. This obviously is a

"Forging a person who can confront and fight evil without being corrupted or compromised by it has never been easy... but to take someone like Evangeline... and turn her into a warrior... is a delicate matter."

crucial juncture in Evangeline's life, as it begin's her transformation from an exceptional, but not extraordinary, "student" into something very different, very new, and very influential — a new order of Nun, if I may express it thusly.

And it is no easy task to effect such a transformation. Forging a person who can confront and fight evil without being corrupted or compromised by it has never been easy. It is even less so when that person must employ violence — and perhaps "nonlegal" violence at that. If one swears off all violence then the encircling arm of evil is easier to resist since evil always involves violence of a sort — whether it be directly or indirectly administered, whether it be physical or nonphysical (spiritual, emotional, etc.) in nature. A strict adherence to what is legal can also be a protection against evil since though legality is no guarantee of justice, it does provide a framework within which to exist and survive. But to take someone like Evangeline who has heretofore accepted both nonviolence and legality as integral parts of what is good and proper, and turn her into a warrior who must embrace violence and skirt the boundaries of the law — this is a delicate matter. To do so is to risk complete disruption of the foundation of character integrity. True, her religious beliefs can be the rock upon which she builds her personal fortress against evil, but it is an isolated rock, unprotected by other principles which usually buttress such structures.

For these reasons and more, the "early years" are very important and I look forward to seeing more stories which explore them.

In the lettercol, Laurel, you raise a question about the nature of miracles — as to their very nature, for instance, if a previously accepted miracle is subsequently explained by application of scientific (or other) principles, is it still a miracle? Well, I have neither the space nor the ability to go into an intricate examination of the nature of miracles here, but it seems to me that one of the most crucial (perhaps *the* most crucial) aspects of miracles is that they involve divine intervention. If they don't, then they can't be miracles. The question then is whether nor not the *method* of divine intervention is important. (Must God obey the physical laws of the universe? And even if He doesn't *have* to, *does* He? I guess it all boils down to whether He chooses to sometimes ignore the laws He has made.) In miracles, it seems that so often it is not so much *what* happens but *when* and *why* it happens. What I'm trying to say here (and doing a poor job of it!) is that it may in fact be the case that all miracles adhere to physical laws and are explainable (at least potentially) in terms of scientific principles. This, however, would not necessarily preclude the possibility of divine intervention, since God may choose to work through natural processes to effect His will on Earth.

T.M. Maple
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Canada M9L 2R9

T.M., you and Stephen seem to be begging the "miracle" question, a bit. If an event can be explained by natural laws, can it be considered miraculous? How would you know *there had been divine intervention? Unless you just consider everything miraculous — which occasionally seems like a good idea. Think I'll have to check out the Baltimore Catechism on this one.*

NEXT ISSUE: Evangeline is diverted to "The Hole," a planet run by scum for scum, who've found a way to get *really* rich without doing *any* work. "Hostage Planet, Part One" by **Chuck Dixon, Jim Balent**, and **Ricardo Villagran**.

— Laurel Fitch